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A New Legionary Epitaph from Venice

Un nuovo epitaffio di legionario da Venezia

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Abstract: *This article presents a fragmentary and hitherto unpublished inscribed funerary stele, which was reused in Venice as an architectural spolium and has recently come to light. The text, written in Latin, is very likely to be the epitaph for a legionary, whose name is unknown since it occupied the part of the inscription that has not survived. Archaeological data and textual analysis suggest that the inscribed stone dates to the 1st - early 2nd centuries AD. It also seems likely that the legionary mentioned in the fragmentary text was a native of Narbonese Gaul who died in Dalmatia or in the eastern Regio X. The inscription can perhaps be associated with another legionary's funerary stele (CIL V, 2162), which was reused in the base of the nearby San Vidal bell-tower.*

Riassunto: *L'articolo presenta una stele iscritta frammentaria e sinora inedita, che è stata rinvenuta di recente a Venezia come spolium architettonico. Il documento epigrafico, scritto in latino, conteneva con tutta probabilità l'epitaffio di un legionario, il cui nome è sconosciuto in quanto si trovava inciso nella parte dell'iscrizione che non è sopravvissuta. I dati archeologici e l'analisi testuale suggeriscono che il monumento sia databile al I secolo d.C. (o agli inizi del II). Sembra inoltre verosimile che il legionario menzionato nel testo frammentario fosse nativo della Gallia Narbonese e fosse morto in Dalmazia o nella Regio X orientale. L'epigrafe può forse essere messa in relazione con un'altra stele funeraria di un legionario (CIL V, 2162), che si trova nei pressi, reimpiegata nel basamento del campanile di San Vidal.*

Keywords: *Funerary inscription, stele, legionary, Venice, Dalmatia, Regio X, Narbonese Gaul*

Parole chiave: *Iscrizione funeraria, stele, legionario, Venezia, Dalmazia, Regio X, Gallia Narbonese*

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I. Roman stones in Venice

This article examines a fragmentary and hitherto unpublished Latin inscription, which has recently come to light in Venice. Before focusing on its text, it is first necessary to discuss briefly the presence of classical, and, in particular, Roman, artefacts in the Venetian area, so as to better appreciate the potential significance of such new discoveries.

While Venice did not develop on the site of an ancient settlement, the city was constructed reusing large quantities of earlier building materials¹. Most of these objects were bricks or carved stones of different shapes and sizes, whose dating to the classical period is difficult to establish with certainty (although measurements and chemical analyses can offer some precious hints)². Among these numerous and often undifferentiated *spolia* a specific and, in a certain sense, privileged category is represented by lapidary inscriptions³.

Reused Greek and Roman stones from Venice bearing an epigraphic text deserve scholarly attention for several reasons: first, perhaps most obviously, they can be more readily identified than artefacts without inscriptions; furthermore they are very abundant and thus offer a broad spectrum of information about different types of monuments and inscribed texts, as well as about their dating; finally, their presence in the city centre and on the surrounding islands has been recorded for a very long time, at least since early Humanism, a process itself worthy of study since it allows scholars to examine drawings and transcriptions of dozens of epigraphic documents that, in many cases, have long since disappeared. The concentration of epigraphic *spolia* in certain parts of the city (St Mark's basilica and bell tower, the ancient cathedral of San Pietro di Castello, as well as many of the earliest parish settlements in the Castello and San Marco districts) and of the lagoon (Torcello and the islands around it, Murano, but also some minor sites in the southern lagoon) seems particularly significant and should be taken into consideration when studying

1. On Venice's multifaceted relationship with the ancient world see P. FORTINI BROWN, *Venice and Antiquity. The Venetian Sense of the Past*, New Haven - London 1996. The massive presence of architectural *spolia* in Venice was the topic of a two-day international conference, whose proceedings will soon be published: see M. CENTANNI, L. SPERTI (eds.), *Le pietre di Venezia. Spolia in se, spolia in re. Atti del convegno internazionale, Venezia, 17-18 ottobre 2013*, Rome, forthcoming (2016).

2. See I. CALLIARI, E. CANAL, S. CAVAZZONI *et alii*, «Roman Bricks from the Lagoon of Venice: A Chemical Characterization with Methods of Multivariate Analysis», in *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 2, 2001, pp. 23-29. For a checklist of features that usually typify in Roman *spolia* see T. EATON, *Plundering the Past. Roman Stonework in Medieval Britain*, Stroud 2000, pp. 139-148.

3. On epigraphic *spolia* in Venice see L. CALVELLI, «Il reimpiego epigrafico a Venezia: i materiali provenienti dal campanile di San Marco», in *AAAd* 74, 2012, pp. 179-202, esp. pp. 179-181, with earlier literature.

the origins and development of these settlements⁴. It should also be stressed that frequent discoveries of previously unknown inscriptions continuously increase the size of this corpus.

At least since Mommsen, epigraphists have been aware of the problems related to the study of inscriptions found in Venice and in the nearby lagoon sites. The most tantalizing of these problems — Mommsen referred to it as the *ineluctabile malum* — is that of their provenance (*origo*)⁵. Stones, like all heavy building materials, can easily be placed on ships or boats and then transported, even over long distances. Since no quarries are located in the immediate vicinity of Venice (the closest ones are on the Euganean hills near Padua or at the foot of the Alps, close to Vicenza and Conegliano), the stone-poor inhabitants of the Venetian lagoon and of its near-shore settlements looking for building materials turned first to other relatively nearby coastal regions, such as Aurisina (next to Trieste), Istria and Dalmatia, but also to more distant locations all along the eastern Mediterranean (especially if they were looking for specific materials). This was true both in the ancient and in the medieval/early modern periods. Moreover, and this point should be stressed, ancient artefacts were brought to Venice not only as *spolia*, but also to form part of collections of antiquities, which are attested in the Serenissima at least from the late Middle Ages onwards⁶.

For these and other reasons, a complete recording of all the Greek and Roman inscriptions that are or used to be visible in Venice and in the nearby lagoon settlements is hard to accomplish. Mommsen himself explicitly decided to give up on this task and adopted a radical, but provisional, solution. In the fifth volume of the *CIL* he declared himself satisfied with assigning all the Latin inscriptions that had been spotted for the first time in or around Venice to the ancient *municipium* of *Altinum*, the closest Roman administrative centre to the Venetian lagoon⁷. As for the inscribed materials coming from antiquarian collections, Mommsen often arbitrarily assigned them to specific geographic areas, such as Dalmatia (those from the Nani Museum) or Rome (those from the Arrigoni and Manin collections)⁸.

4. For a first overview of the potentials of studying ancient inscriptions from Venice see L. CALVELLI, «Da Altino a Venezia», in M. TIRELLI (ed.), *Altino antica. Dai Veneti a Venezia*, Venezia 2011, pp. 184-197, with several case-studies.

5. *CIL* V, p. 205: *Venetis titulis hoc proprium insidet ineluctabile malum, ut de vera origine plerumque non satis constet*.

6. For further reference on Venetian antiquarian collections see I. FAVARETTO, *Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima*, Roma 2002²; M. HOCHMANN, R. LAUBER, S. MASON (eds.), *Il collezionismo d'arte a Venezia*, I-III, Venezia 2007-2009.

7. *CIL* V, p. 205: *Nos satis habuimus eos hic componere*.

8. *CIL* V, p. 205: *Quod attinet ad musea quae esse desierunt, [...] Nanianos, de quorum origine aliunde non constaret, inter Dalmaticos; denique Arigonianos et Maninianos [...] inter urbanos*. On inscriptions from the Nani collection see now L. CALVELLI, F. CREMA, F. LUCIANI, «The Nani Museum: Greek and Roman Inscriptions from Greece and Dalmatia», in D. DEMICHELII (ed.), *Illyrica Antiqua 2. In honorem Duje Rendić-Miočević. Conference proceedings. Šibenik, 12-15 September 2013*, Zagreb, forthcoming (2016).

In more recent years, a group of researchers from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice has begun to reassess the whole corpus of ancient epigraphic documents that have passed through Venice⁹. The only way to do this is to examine in detail every single inscription, in an attempt to collect all the data that both the text and the monument (when it still exists), as well as any previous handwritten or printed transcriptions, can offer. This is time-consuming research, which almost never gives definitive solutions. Yet even its partial results are encouraging for at least two reasons. First, the possibility of identifying the exact provenance of even one single inscription can be highly significant and lead to a number of consequences for the study of Greek and Roman history (revision of the corpus of ancient sources from a certain area; new social, onomastic, economic, and art-historical data etc.). Secondly, and this should be borne in mind by archaeologists focusing on Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, reused inscriptions can shed new light on the long-debated question of the genesis of the Venetian settlements.

At present, a rough calculation suggests that there are about 500 ancient inscriptions that at some point in their history were recorded in Venice and/or on the nearby islands either as building materials or as objects in antiquarian collections (the two categories may also overlap, since previously reused stones could then enter private or public museums, while the reverse of this is far rarer). In fact, the group of epigraphic *spolia* includes approximately 170 inscriptions, while the ancient inscribed objects that passed through antiquarian collections number certainly over 300. Even if both lists are probably still incomplete, these are absolutely striking numbers for a city that did not develop on top of a classical settlement. When properly contextualized, such information could thus be very helpful, especially for scholars investigating the development of human settlements in the Venetian lagoon and the way in which urban infrastructures took shape¹⁰.

9. For a detailed description of our research projects and a full list of the bibliography so far produced, please visit the *Laboratorio di Epigrafia latina* and the *Laboratorio di Epigrafia greca* homepages on the Ca' Foscari website (www.unive.it).

10. On the progress of archaeological research in Venice see A.J. AMMERMAN, «Venice before the Grand Canal», in *MAAR* 48, 2003, pp. 141-158; M. DE MIN, «Nuovi dati sullo sviluppo insediativo lagunare nel periodo delle origini della *Civitas Veneciarum*. Forme e tecniche del costruire», in E. BIANCHIN CITTON, M. TIRELLI (eds.), ...*Ut... rosae... ponerentur. Scritti di archeologia in ricordo di Giovanna Luisa Ravagnan*, Dosson 2006, pp. 227-243.; S. GELICHI, «L'archeologia nella laguna veneziana e la nascita di una nuova città», in *Reti Medievali Rivista* 11/2, 2010, pp. 1-31; S. GELICHI *et alii*, «Isole fortunate? La storia della laguna nord di Venezia attraverso lo scavo di San Lorenzo di Ammiana», in *Archeologia medievale* 39, 2012, pp. 9-56. An overview of recent literature is also offered by A. AMMERMAN, «Altinum and Early Venice», in *JRA* 25, 2012, pp. 696-703, but the author has failed to understand how *spolia* can help reconstruct the earliest stages of Venetian history.

2. Description and critical edition of the new fragmentary inscription

In autumn 2010 the corpus of Roman inscriptions from Venice increased by one when some restoration works were carried out at a building located in the Campo San Vidal, a few dozen metres to the north of the Accademia bridge. The building, belonging to the *Domus Ciliota*, a religious institution that accommodates students from the University of Venice¹¹, lies west of the San Vidal bell tower and shares its eastern wall with it¹². When a large chunk of plaster and debris from the façade of the building unexpectedly fell down, it revealed that the previously covered side of the left jamb of a ground-floor window bore the remains of a Roman inscription¹³. Without being removed, the artefact was carefully cleaned on its sides and is now clearly visible in its original (although, obviously, secondary) position (figs. 1-2).

The text of the inscription is carved on a white limestone stele, only a portion of which (broken into two matching halves) survives. It measures 85 × (23.5) × 17 cm. The front surface of the monument is chipped in several places; the left and the right sides have been recut and are certainly not original; the top has been slightly smoothed when the stone was reused; the back is original and appears to have been smoothed in antiquity with a claw chisel. The height of the monument corresponds to two Roman feet and ten inches and is probably original; the depth is certainly original and corresponds exactly to seven Roman inches (i.e., half a foot and one inch). Petrographic analysis of the artefact might prove useful in the future in order to determine its geographic provenance.

The extant text is distributed over four lines. No upper or lower sections of the text seem to be missing, but each of the surviving lines is fragmentary on both sides (except perhaps for the last one, which, as we shall see, is probably incomplete only on its left side). The height of the letters gradually diminishes (line 1: 10 cm = 4 Roman inches; line 2: 8.5 cm = 3 and a half Roman inches; line 3: 7 cm = 2 and a half Roman inches; line 4: 7 cm = 2 and a half Roman inches).

The text that is visible may be transcribed as follows:

[- - -]us +[- - -]
[- - -]us n[- - -]
[- - -]r leg[- - -]
[- - -] est[- - -?].

11. On this pious institution, founded by Pietro Ciliota in 1822, see E. DALL'ASTA, *Intorno alla vita e mirabili azioni del sacerdote veneziano don Pietro Ciliota della parrocchia di Santo Stefano morto in concetto di speciale santità il giorno 22 novembre 1846*, Venezia 1857.

12. The address of the building is San Marco 2862.

13. The accident took place on 19 October 2010. By a fortunate coincidence Mr Onofrio Gasparro, a student of Latin Epigraphy, lived in the building and immediately notified Prof. Giovannella Cresci and myself of this discovery.



Fig. 1. The newly discovered fragmentary inscription (© Oliviero Zane)



Fig. 2. Rectified and enhanced image of the newly discovered fragmentary inscription (© Gaia Trombin)

All letters are V-cut and have serifs; their carving gradually becoming lighter from the first to the last line. The *ductus* is in general regular and elongated. Words are separated by light interpuncts. A more substantial triangular interpunct pointing downwards is clearly visible at the beginning of the last line. At the end of the first line the left part of a round letter is clearly visible: the only possible letters that could be restored here are a C, G, O, or Q. The letter R at the beginning of line 3 is closed, i.e., its curved bowl touches its vertical bar; the Es in the third and fourth lines have equal cross-bars of medium length.

Despite its incomplete state, the inscription can be interpreted with a high degree of certainty as the epitaph of a legionary. This can be assumed on the basis of the final letters of the third line, which are most plausibly an abbreviation of the word *leg(ionis)*. It is also obvious that the stone bore the name of the deceased man in the nominative case. In fact, the first line of the text is likely to contain the last two letters of his gentilician *nomen* (-us), which was in all likelihood preceded by the indication of his *praenomen*. The round letter that followed can be interpreted as the beginning of the filiation formula, which must have been either *C(ai)* or *Cn(aei)* or *Q(uinti) f(ilius)*. The end of the line possibly mentioned the voting-tribe in which the deceased was registered, indicated, as usual, with the first three or four letters of the tribal name. This is also suggested by the fact that all the other surviving lines need room for about four or five letters on their right hand side.

The second line probably began with the *cognomen* of the deceased, the termination of which is still legible (-us), followed by the letters NA, which are not easy to interpret. They could be the beginning of an *origo*. In that case, if we assume that the legionary was a Roman citizen at the time of the levy, he could have been a native of an Italian town such as *Narnia* in Umbria (a Latin colony founded in 299 BC, which became a *municipium* after the Social War¹⁴) or of a provincial settlement of citizens like *Narbo Martius* in Gaul (a Roman colony founded in 118 BC¹⁵) or *Narona* in Dalmatia (a *colonia Iulia*, probably founded by Cesar¹⁶). Less probably, the letters NA could also be interpreted as the beginning of the formulaic expressions

14. On the foundation of *Narnia* see G. BRADLEY, *Ancient Umbria. State, Culture, and Identity in Central Italy from the Iron Age to the Augustan Era*, Oxford 2000, pp. 128-138; S. SISANI, *Fenomenologia della conquista. La romanizzazione dell'Umbria tra il IV sec. a.C. e la guerra sociale*, Roma 2007, pp. 85-89.

15. On the foundation of *Narbo Martius* see V. MAREK, «Die Gründung der römischen Kolonie Narbo Martius», in *GLP* 11, 1988, pp. 23-48; on the voting-tribes associated with this colony see also M.L. BONSANGUE, «Les tribus à Narbonne», in M. SILVESTRINI (ed.), *Le tribù romane. Atti della XVI^e Rencontre sur l'épigraphie*, Bari, 8-10 October 2009, Bari 2010, pp. 43-56.

16. On the foundation of *Narona* see G. ALFÖLDY, «Caesarische und augusteische Kolonien in der Provinz Dalmatien», in *AAntHung* 10, 1962, pp. 357-365, part. pp. 358-360; J.J. WILKES, *Dalmatia*, London 1969, pp. 245-252; more recently see also G. PACI, «Narona: le iscrizioni delle mura e la storia della città sul finire dell'età repubblicana», in M. BUORA (ed.), *Le regioni di Aquileia e Spalato in epoca romana*, Udine 2006, pp. 17-34, part. pp. 27-31; M. MAYER I OLIVÉ, «Cicerón y Narona», in Kačić. *Zbornik Franjevačke provincije presvetoga otkupitelja* 41-43, 2009-2011, pp. 169-177.

natus or *natus domo*. These are not frequent among legionaries, but are attested in a number of inscriptions¹⁷. A third, but unlikely, possibility is that the legionary's origin was marked by the term *natio* (declined in the ablative). This is of course rare, since in early imperial times (i.e., according to the chronology suggested by the palaeography of the inscription, see below) soldiers who served in the legions should normally have been Roman citizens at the time of the levy. However, there were exceptions to this general rule, namely in the case of *peregrini* who acquired citizenship when they entered the legions¹⁸. Several inscriptions, especially from the Balkan area, testify to this phenomenon, but they mostly date to the mid or late imperial period¹⁹.

In the third line the word ending in R preceding the letters LEG can be restored in several ways. The most likely restoration, based on the frequency of such terms in military inscriptions, is a non-abbreviated word such as *signifer*, *speculator*, *aquilifer* or *imaginifer leg(ionis)*, the first two solutions being far more common. However, abbreviated formulas such as *veter(anus) leg(ionis)* should also be taken into consideration. The end of the line most probably recorded the numeral of the legion, followed perhaps by an abbreviated title; however, comparison with the probable text distribution in the other lines suggests that there was not enough space for the latter.

It is likely that the fourth and last line of the inscription was entirely occupied by the formula [*hic situs*] *est*, which, as shown by its surviving part, was probably not to be abbreviated. Since the *ordinatio* of the text seems to have been quite regular, the space between the triangular interpunct and the E (8 cm = 3 and a half Roman inches) was probably repeated before the interpunct itself and the end of the preceding word (*situs*). A similar empty space probably appeared between the T of *est* and the end of the inscribed field (figs. 3-4).

17. See for instance CIL III, 4188: *L(ucius) Licinius / L(uci) f(ilius) Clau(dia) Lepid(us) / natus dom[o] / Verona vet[er(anus)] / leg(ionis) X[V] Apol[li(naris)]*; CIL III, 7502: *D(is) M(anibus) / Iul(ius) Ponticus vixit / ann(os) XXXII milit(avit) / ann(os) XIV in leg(ione) V / Mac(edonica) natus Amas/tris Iul(ius) Ponticus / frater Sentius Ponticus vet(eranus) Sentius Ponticus mil(es) leg(ionis) V Mac(edonicae) / fratres cohered(es) / b(ene) m(erenti) d(e) s(uo) p(osuerunt)*; AE 1961, 15: *C(aius) Iulius C(ai) f(ilius) Papilria natus Cormasa / missicius lecinis (!) / VII eques mono/mentum (!) fecit / sibi et Iulio Iul(cundo) liberto / suo*.

18. See G. FORNI, «L'anagrafia del soldato e del veterano», in *Actes du VII^e Congrès International d'Épigraphie Grecque et Latine* (Costanza, 1977), Bucarest-Paris 1979, pp. 205-228, esp. pp. 217-218 (reprint in G. FORNI, *Esercito e marina di Roma antica*, Stuttgart 1992, pp. 180-205). On the *natio* and the *domus* of legionary soldiers see S. PEREA YÉBENES, «Las patrias del soldado romano en el Alto Imperio», in *ETF (HistAnt)* 17-18, 2004-2005, pp. 161-189, esp. pp. 146-148.

19. See for instance CIL III, 3301: *D(is) M(anibus) / Aur(elio) Proculino mil(iti) / q(ui) vixit annos XXXV / dies L Aur(elius) Proculus / vet(eranus) leg(ionis) II Ad(iutricis) natione / Surus domo Hemel/sa cum Cl(audia) Candida / parentes filio ka/rissimo posu(erunt) cum Aeli(a) Iustina coniu(ge)*; CIL III, 8730: *Ven(nonia?) Quartilla Aur(elio) Materno / coniugi incomparabili et in/nocentissimo vet(erano) leg(ionis) II Itallic(ae) natione Noric(o) qui vixit / ann(os) XLVIII posuit con/iunx b(ene) m(erenti)*; AE 1941, 166: *D(is) M(anibus) / Ulp(ius) Maximus / nat(ione) Pann(onijs) milles l(egionis) X G(eminae) stip(endiorum) XVIII / anno(rum) XXXVIII reldi(ens) a Parthia del/cessit III Non(as) / Sept(embres) heres faci/endum curavit / Tertyllo (!) et Cle/mente co(n)s(ulibus)*.

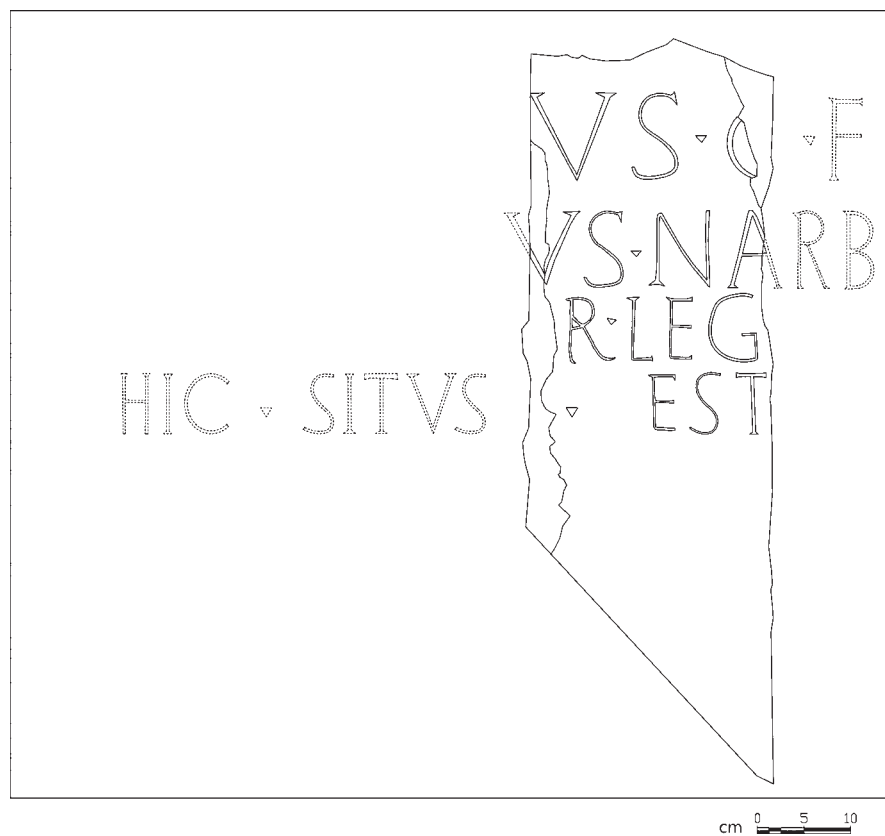


Fig. 3. Facsimile drawing and hypothetical reconstruction of the newly discovered fragmentary inscription (© Gaia Trombin)

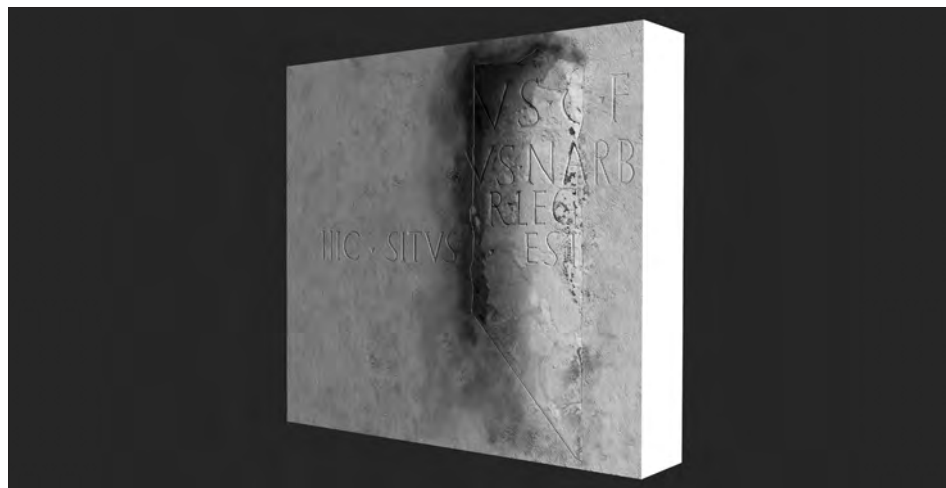


Fig. 4. 3D rendering of the reconstructed fragmentary inscription (© Gaia Trombin)

The fragmentary status of the inscription and its post-classical reuse cause numerous problems of interpretation. In particular, two issues have to be addressed: (1) the dating of the monument and (2) its geographical provenance.

As for the first point, some help is provided by palaeographic analysis (fig. 5): the letters with serifs, the shape of the Es, the triangular interpunct at the beginning of line 4, and, in general, the regular and elegant letter forms suggest that the inscription dates to the 1st century AD or, at the latest, to the earlier decades of the 2nd century AD. This is also confirmed by the presence of the non-abbreviated funerary formula *hic situs est*, which probably occupied the entire last line of the text²⁰.

Insofar as the origin of the inscription is concerned, the combination of the formulas *signifer* / *speculator* / *aquilifer* / *imaginifer* or *veter(anus) leg(ionis)* and *hic situs est* is so widespread in the Roman world that it cannot be associated with any specific area. Nonetheless, since the inscription was found in Venice, two areas of the empire should be taken into closer consideration to determine its origin: the eastern section of the Augustan *Regio X* (later *Venetia et Histria*) and the coast of the province of Dalmatia. In fact, most Roman inscriptions that were reused in Venice came from either of these areas²¹. In the former, however, the formula *hic situs est* is very rarely attested: its use by legionaries is concentrated in the area of Aquileia (four inscriptions²²), with two more inscriptions coming from a context of reuse and from an antiquarian collection²³. On the contrary, in Dalmatia the use of *hic situs est* is extremely common, especially among legionaries²⁴. As a result, the stele is more likely to come from the Dalmatian shores of the Adriatic, rather than from its Italian side. This would be confirmed of course if the reading *Na[ro(na)]* in the second line were correct. But a Dalmatian provenance is also possible if one accepts the other most probable restoration: *Na[rb(one)]*. In fact, legionaries from southern Gaul are widely attested in Dalmatia both epigraphically²⁵ and from a passage by

20. See M.-T. RAEPSAET-CHARLIER, «*Hic situs est* ou *Dis manibus*: du bon usage de la prudence dans la datation des épitaphes gallo-romaines», in *AC* 71, 2002, pp. 221-227.

21. See CALVELLI, «Da Altino a Venezia», *cit.*, pp. 185-189; CALVELLI, «Il reimpiego epigrafico...», *cit.*, pp. 179-181; L. CALVELLI, «Reimpieghi epigrafici datati da Venezia e dalla laguna veneta», in CEN-TANNI, SPERTI (eds.), *Le pietre di Venezia...*, *cit.*

22. *CIL* V, 911, 920, 927, 932.

23. *AE* 1959, 262 (*spolium* from Cittanova / Eraclea) and *CIL* V, 2500 (from the Obizzi collection, once housed in the Cataio castle near Padua).

24. A search performed on the Clauss-Slaby epigraphic database combining the formula «*hic situs est*» and the word «*legionis*» currently (settembre 2015) gives 63 results for Dalmatia.

25. See *CIL* III, 2035 (a centurion from *Aquae Sextiae* who was buried in *Salona*), 2733 (a legionary from *Forum Iulii* who settled in *Aequum*), 2839 (another legionary from *Forum Iulii* who settled in *Burnum*), 8740 (a legionary from Vienne who died in *Salona*), 13251 (a legionary from *Lucus Augusti* who died in *Burnum*), 14992 (a legionary from Vienne who also died in *Burnum*); *ILJug* 2818 (another legionary from Vienne who died in *Burnum*). See also WILKES, *Dalmatia*, *cit.*, p. 466; J.J. WILKES, «Army and society in Roman Dalmatia», in G. ALFÖLDY, B. DOBSON, W. ECK (eds.), *Kaiser, Heer und Gesellschaft in der römischen Kaiserzeit. Gedenkschrift für Eric Birley*, Stuttgart 2000, pp. 327-341; B. REMY, F. KAYSER, *Les Viennois hors de Vienne*, Bordeaux 2005, p. 116, nos. LV, LVII, LXIII-LXIV.



Fig. 5. Detail showing palaeographic features of lines 2-4 of the newly discovered fragmentary inscription (© Lorenzo Calvelli)

Tacitus, who mentions that in AD 65 levies were held in Narbonese Gaul, Africa and Asia to recruit the legions for Illyricum²⁶. At any rate a provenance from Aquileia or the eastern *Regio X* cannot be dismissed. On the basis of all the considerations that have been discussed so far, the following tentative restoration of the text of the inscription can be proposed:

[- -]us + [f(ilius) - -]
 [- -]us Na[r(b)one?]
 [- -]r leg(ionis) [- -]
 [hic situs] est.

One last consideration can be made concerning the potential origin of this newly inscribed stone and its findspot. As mentioned above, the inscription was discovered reused in a building adjacent to the San Vidal bell-tower in Venice. It is relevant here to note that the base of this *campanile* incorporates one of the most famous Venetian

26. Tac. ann. XVI, 13, 3: *eodem anno dilectus per Galliam Narbonensem Africamque et Asiam habiti sunt supplendis Illyrici legionibus, ex quibus aetate aut valetudine fessi sacramento solvebantur.*

epigraphic *spolia* (figs. 6-7). This is a funerary slab (divided into two separate pieces) made for himself by Cn. Numerius Fronto, a veteran of the *legio VIII Augusta*, who had been an *equus legionis* and who also served as a *quattuorvir iure dicundo* in an unspecified civic community²⁷. Theodor Mommsen assigned this inscription to *Altinum*, although he was well aware that Cn. Numerius Fronto was not a member of the principal voting-tribe associated with this *municipium* (the *Scaptia*), but patently belonged to the *Voltinia*²⁸. Future research should concentrate on the provenance of this inscription²⁹, which dates to the Augustan or early Julio-Claudian period. In fact, legionaries and veterans from the *legio VIII Augusta* are widely attested in the former Illyricum³⁰, where the legion is believed to have been based in the late Augustan period, even if its precise transfers and garrison bases remain uncertain³¹. Several veterans from the same legion are also known to have settled at Aquileia³². Cn. Numerius Fronto could have been a *quattuorvir iure dicundo* in *Altinum* (as it is generally accepted), but he could also have held this magistracy in one of the Roman colonies of Dalmatia, such as *Salona* or *Narona*³³, as well as in Aquileia,

27. CIL V, 2162: Cn(aeus) Numerius Cn(aei) f(ilius) / Vol(tinia) Fronto / veter(anus) eq(ues) leg(ionis) VIII Aug(ustae) / IIIIvir .i(iure) d(icundo) t(estamento) f(ieri) i(ussit) sibi, / Cn(aeo) Numerio Cn(aei) l(iberto) Felici / IIIIIVir(o), / Crescenti, l(iberto), Tuendo l(iberto). On this inscription see also E. TODISCO, *I veterani in Italia in età imperiale*, Bari 1999, pp. 143-144, no. 124; E. ZAMPIERI, *Presenza servile e mobilità sociale in area altinate. Problemi e prospettive*, Portogruaro 2000, pp. 117-118, 164-165, no. 35.

28. In the indices of CIL V Mommsen classified Cn. Numerius Fronto as *incertae domo* (CIL V, p. 1184); see also G. FORNI, *Le tribù romane*, I, *Tribules*, III, Roma 2007, p. 905, no. 136. On the voting-tribes associated with *Altinum* see F. LUCIANI, A. PISTELLATO, *Regio X (Venetia et Histria) - parte centro-settentrionale: Iulia Concordia, Opitergium, Bellunum, Feltria, Acelum, Tarvisium, Altinum*, in SILVESTRI, *Le tribù romane...*, cit., pp. 253-264, esp. pp. 259-260.

29. A late 16th-century source (Francesco Sansovino's 1581 guidebook to Venice) states that this inscription came from Pula in Istria; see F. SANSOVINO, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare, descritta in XIII libri*, Venezia 1581, f. 45v: «A piè del suo campanile sono due iscrizioni antiche di un Caio Numerio: portate credo io da Puola». This piece of information was rejected (without adequate explanation) by Mommsen (CIL V, 2162: «Pola venisse Venetias credit Sansovino [...] temere»).

30. For the *legio VIII Augusta* in Dalmatia see I. BOJANOVSKI, «Legio VIII Augusta u Dalmaciji», in *AArchSlov* 41, 1990, pp. 699-712; M. MIRKOVIC, «The legio VIII Augusta in the Balkans», in P. DYCZEK (ed.), *Novae and the Romans on Rhine, Danube, Black Sea and beyond the Frontiers of the Empire. Acta of the international conference, Wykno, 18-22 November 1995* (Novensia 10), Warszawa 1998, pp. 89-98. See also S. FERJANČIĆ, *Settlement of Legionary Veterans in Balkan Provinces. I-III Century AD*, Belgrade 2002 (in Serbian).

31. On the history of the *legio VIII Augusta* see M. REDDÉ, «Legio VIII Augusta», in Y. LE BOHEC (ed.), *Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire. Actes du congrès, Lyon, 17-19 September 1998*, Lyon 2000, pp. 119-126.

32. See *InscrAq* 2752-2760. On the veterans from the *legio VIII Augusta* who settled in Aquileia see M. PAVAN, «Presenze di militari nel territorio di Aquileia», in *AAAd* 15, 1979, pp. 461-513, esp. pp. 467-468 (reprint in M. PAVAN, *Dall'Adriatico al Danubio*, Padova 1991, pp. 159-200, esp. pp. 163-164); G. FORNI, «Epigraphica III», in *Epigraphica* 50, 1988, pp. 105-141, esp. pp. 105-114 (reprinted in G. FORNI, *Le tribù romane*, IV, *Scripta minora*, Roma 2006, pp. 485-509, esp. pp. 485-490); TODISCO, *I veterani...*, cit., pp. 128-129.

33. The traditional view that Roman colonies were only governed by *duoviri* has long been recognized as inadequate; for the case of Dalmatian colonies see ALFÖLDY, «Caesarische und augusteische



Fig. 6. CIL V, 2162, lines 1-2 (© Lorenzo Calvelli)



Fig. 7. CIL V, 2162, lines 3-7 (© Oliviero Zane)

Kolonien...», *cit.*; ALFÖLDY, «Veteraneneduktionen in der Provinz Dalmatien», in *Historia* 13, 1964, pp. 167-179; WILKES, *Dalmatia*, *cit.*, pp. 220-261; H. GALSTERER, «CIL III, 2733 und die Entstehung der Kolonie in Aequum», in *ZPE* 7, 1971, pp. 79-91; and, more recently, U. LAFFI, «*Quattuorviri iure dicundo in colonie romane*», in P.G. MICHELOTTO (ed.), *Λόγιος ἀνὴρ. Studi di antichità in memoria di Mario Attilio Levi*, Milano 2002, pp. 243-262, esp. pp. 253-255 (reprinted in U. LAFFI, *Colonie e municipi nello Stato romano*, Roma 2007, esp. pp. 139-142).

during the period when this town was designated as a *municipium civium Romanorum* and, later, as a Roman colony³⁴. As for the *Voltinia*, even if no specific town in the Adriatic context was assigned to this voting-tribe, its presence is well attested epigraphically both in the eastern part of the *Regio X* and throughout Dalmatia³⁵. Such a circumstance can be explained by the presence of several legionaries and veterans who were native of other geographic areas of the empire and had originally been registered in the *Voltinia* in their hometown (usually either in Narbonese Gaul or at Philippi in Macedonia), but had died or settled down in or around the areas where their legions were stationed.

To conclude, archaeological data and textual analysis seem to indicate that the broken inscribed stele that was recently found as a *spolium* in the vicinity of the church of San Vidal in Venice came either from the eastern shores of the Adriatic or from the eastern part of the *Regio X*. In particular it seems likely that the legionary mentioned in the inscription was a native of Narbonese Gaul who died in Dalmatia: this is suggested by the funerary formula [*hic situs*] *est*, as well as by the letters NA, which should indicate his *origo* (possibly Na[rbone], or, maybe, Na[rona]) and appear right after the legionary's *cognomen*. Finally, the new epigraphic document can perhaps be associated with the long-known funerary monument of Cn. Numerius Fronto, which is built into the base of the San Vidal bell-tower and also commemorates a legionary, who also possibly came from Narbonese Gaul. On a purely speculative basis, it can be suggested that these two inscribed epitaphs originally belonged to a common burial ground that hosted veterans from Narbonese Gaul, who had fought in the Roman legions (perhaps in the same one i.e. the *legio VIII Augusta*) and who later settled in Dalmatia (or alternatively in the *Regio X*, for instance, at Aquileia). A more thorough investigation of the circumstances that brought these two inscribed artefacts to Venice is needed before such a hypothesis can be validated.

34. See C. ZACCARIA, «Amministrazione e vita politica ad Aquileia dalle origini al III secolo d.C.», in *AAAd* 54, 2003, pp. 293-338.

35. For the eastern tenth region see *AE* 1995, 564 (from Pula), *CIL* V, 486 (from *Tergeste*), *InscrAq* 155, 2744, 2762, 2835 (from Aquileia). See also A. GARZETTI, «Veterani nelle valli alpine», in *RSA* 6-7, 1976-1977, pp. 173-187, part. p. 184. For Dalmatia see *CIL* III, 2031, 2035, 8740 and *AE* 1991, 1291 (from Salona), *CIL* III, 2714, 2717, 14933 (from *Tilurium*), *CIL* III, 2838, 13251 and *ILJug* III, 2818 (from *Burnum*); *CIL* III, 9761 (from *Aequum*).